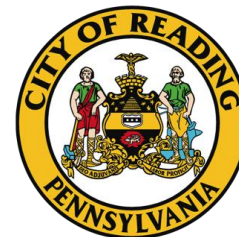


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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Reading's Rapid Response to Graffiti**

August 10, 2015 – Reading, PA - Illegal graffiti is an unattractive blemish on our city that affects the quality of life, economic development, and social fabric. By working together, we have been optimizing current resources to better serve the needs of the public when it comes to improving our quality of life. □

The newest addition to streamlining this process is Reading iRequest. “With the new Reading iRequest customer service platform, our goal is not only to create a more connected, citizen-responsive city, but also to inspire other cities to follow our model and engage their citizens,” said Mayor Spencer. “When I came into office, I made it a priority to enhance transparent and efficient government, increase integrity, build better open data practices and improve government accountability. We want to empower people and work with citizens of Reading to get done the creative and sustainable solutions to quality of life and government related issues that citizens care most about.”

The new service system empowers citizens to submit service requests that can include reporting graffiti and requesting its removal, to access city information, to engage with local organizations, to find educational opportunities and to improve public safety city-wide by phone, the web, the app, or social media.

Currently, the City of Reading has the following procedures in place to report graffiti. These can also be found on our website under the Public Works Department.

#### **Processes to Report Graffiti**

- Graffiti can be reported 24 hours/day, 7 days a week by logging onto [Reading iRequest](#) (this website can be accessed from the front page of the City of Reading's website ([www.readingpa.gov](http://www.readingpa.gov)) and reporting the vandalism there. This is the same software that our Citizens' Service Center uses, but anyone can access it from home without having to wait for regular business hours.
- Graffiti vandalism can also be reported to the Citizens' Service Center in City Hall, by phone at 1-877-PAREADING (1-877-727-3234) or by using the [Contact City Hall Form](#).

#### **Guidelines to Reporting Graffiti**

- Provide the exact address and zip code of the graffiti
- Indicate what kind of structure was tagged (house, wall, sidewalk etc.) and where (front, side, back of property)
- Specify what kind of removal method is preferred: painted surfaces can be repainted – we need to know what color. Unpainted surfaces such as natural brick, stone, and metal can be power-washed.
- Be proactive – report graffiti as soon as it appears in your neighborhood

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## **Operating Procedures**

- Property owners who report graffiti vandalism on their own property can expect a response within 24 hours.
- When reporting graffiti vandalism on property other than your own, the City must first post a waiver on the property giving the property owner five (5) days to remediate the vandalism, or the City of Reading Graffiti Abatement Program will remove it at no cost. Removal will take place after the 5 day period has expired.
- Unreported graffiti vandalism is located, documented, photographed and a waiver posted by the City of Reading Graffiti Abatement Manager to allow the city to remove it after the 5 day waiting period expires.
- Our primary methods of graffiti removal are either painting over the graffiti vandalism, or applying graffiti specific chemicals and pressure washing, depending on the surface.
- The Graffiti Abatement Office maintains data from graffiti vandalism incidents, including photographs and estimates of removal costs.

“The key to effective graffiti prevention strategies will be in innovative partnerships with residents, businesses and community leaders,” commented Jessica Didow, Chief Service Officer for the City of Reading. “We also want to find ways for legitimate expression of street art, so that we capture Reading’s artistic energy in legal, respectful, and attractive ways while fighting vandalism.”

Graffiti and tagging diminish the quality of life that in the City of Reading. Vandals don't just mark up walls and public spaces, they make our community feel less safe. Mayor Spencer commented, “I look forward to more dialogue between citizens, the artist community, local community leaders, and City officials concerning a practical plan that both works to end this criminal activity and finds ways to highlight our city’s artistic energy.”□

**For any questions or concerns regarding our program, please contact the Mayor’s Office at 610.655.6234 or by email at [mayor@readingpa.org](mailto:mayor@readingpa.org).**

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